

**From:** [Reyes Romero](#)  
**To:** [SaltonSeaComments;](#)  
**CC:** [Brad Poiriez;](#)  
**Subject:** ICAPCD Comments on PEIR for the Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 10, 2007 4:59:09 PM  
**Attachments:** [ICAPCD Commens on PEIR for Salton Sea Restoration.pdf](#)

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Attached is a copy of Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) comments for the Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program. A hard copy of our comment letter is in the mail.

thanks,

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**JAN 16 2007**

January 10, 2007

Mr. Dale Hoffman-Floerke  
Department of Water Resources  
Colorado River & Salton Sea Office  
1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 1148-6  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Imperial County Air Pollution Control District Comments on a Draft  
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Salton Sea  
Ecosystem Restoration Program.

Dear Mr. Hoffman:

The California Department of Water Resources and California Department of Fish and Game, under the direction of the California Resources Agency, has made available for public review and comment the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program (PEIR). The Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD), the air quality authority for Imperial County and the Salton Sea Air Basin, acknowledges the importance of these efforts and envision this project to be utilized as a feasible tool to evaluate any pollution problems that may be generated due to the reduction of inflows to the Salton Sea.

The PEIR identifies air quality emission as one likely impact of the restoration program and estimates the amount of new pollutant emissions associated with the proposed alternatives. The amount of emissions estimated for each alternative is only one aspect of addressing the air quality impacts. The most important question, and which has not been answered in this document, is whether the alternatives under consideration will cause the pollution levels in the ambient air to reach levels that are detrimental to human health or the environment. The ICAPCD would like to stress the seriousness of our position as not endorsing any of the identified alternatives that are offered by the PEIR. While the ICAPCD does not endorse any specific alternative, the ICAPCD would like to restate its position requesting full mitigation of air quality impacts associated with this project, regardless of which alternative is ultimately selected to be implemented.

Based on our preliminary review of the documents provided by your office, the ICAPCD requests the following issues be addressed in the Final PEIR:

Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Data, Ozone (Chapter 10, Page 10-10)

This section of the PEIR presents a general overview of the Ozone and PM<sub>10</sub> ambient air quality monitoring data for Imperial and Riverside counties. It is the ICAPCD's opinion that due to their proximity to the Salton Sea area, the selection of the El Centro and Westmorland stations is appropriate for the ambient ozone and PM<sub>10</sub> representation. However, the ICAPCD recommends that in order to present a more clear picture of the status of air quality in the area surrounding the Salton Sea, the air quality monitoring data for the Niland Station should also be included in this assessment.

The ICAPCD has found a discrepancy on the monitoring data presented in Table 10-3 which contains state and federal Ozone concentrations for the 1-hour and 8-hour maximums, 3-year 4<sup>th</sup> highs, and expected peak day concentrations (EPDC). The data represented for the 1-hour EPDC, 8-hour maximum, and 3-year average 4<sup>th</sup> high are incorrect. According to the information provided by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the 2005 EPDC, which is reported as 0.097, should be 0.114. For the maximum value, 0.084 was reported; however according to CARB, this should be 0.100. Similarly, for the 3-year average 4<sup>th</sup> high, 0.115 was reported when it should be 0.084. Similar discrepancies are found throughout the information provided for the previous years. Because of the implications of the data as presented in this table, this information should be revised and corrected accordingly.

Table 10-4 contains PM<sub>10</sub> data summary for Imperial and Riverside counties. The ICAPCD found some inconsistencies with the data; such as for the 1998 national annual average, the 1999 state days above 24-hour standard and the 2005 high 24 hour national and state averages. In addition, the "not available" classification for the 2004 national annual average, the 2004 expected peak day concentrations and all of the 2005 "not available" classifications are fiction since data does exist for those categories. This information should be revised and corrected.

Table 10-5 contains ambient SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub> and CO concentrations. The "not available" classifications for the 2004 and 2005 classifications under the maximum 8-hour day greater than the state 8-hour standard and the day greater than the national 8-hour standard are also fiction since data does exist for those categories. This information should be revised and corrected.

Methodology for Estimation of Emissions from Construction (Chapter 10, Page 10-26)

This section in the PEIR presents a general overview of the methodology used to estimate air emission from construction activities. Construction emissions were only calculated for the major components of the alternatives, focusing only on two pollutants, NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>. Emissions estimates included NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> from operation of combustion equipment and fugitive PM<sub>10</sub>. Air emissions were evaluated assuming that only conventional equipment and mitigation measures will be used during the construction of this project.

As presented in the PEIR, emissions from construction exhaust, as well as PM<sub>10</sub> fugitive emissions generated due to construction are well above the thresholds of significance and therefore these emissions will likely have an adverse impact on the air quality for this region. CEQA requires that an EIR shall include sufficient information to permit full assessment of all significant environmental impacts. The ICAPCD recommends that the PEIR evaluates emissions for all air pollutants that could potentially be emitted from the construction phase of this project, including but not limited to carbon monoxide, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, sulfur oxides, volatile organic compounds, and hazardous air pollutants. The ICAPCD disagrees with the decision that full disclosure of air emissions is only needed for the project-level analysis.

Due to the magnitude of the emissions from the construction phase for this project, especially PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>, the ICAPCD encourages the PEIR to explore new and innovative technologies which will help to reduce air impacts, such as the use of conveyor belts for transport of construction material to the site, etc. In addition the ICAPCD recommends that the project level analysis include requirements for land based and marine diesel combustion equipment to adhere to the latest combustion control emission standards, such as, Tier 4 for construction equipment and Tier 2 for marine equipment.

Methodology for Estimation of PM<sub>10</sub> Emissions from Exposed Playa Areas (Chapter 10, Page 10-27)

This section in the PEIR presents a general overview of the methodology used to estimate PM<sub>10</sub> emissions from exposed playa areas. Two main assumptions were applied to the calculation of PM<sub>10</sub> emissions for each alternative: a) playa exhibits stable crust conditions eight months of the year (April through November) and b) playa exhibits unstable crust conditions four months of the year (December through March). To estimate PM<sub>10</sub> emissions from exposed playa areas after implementation of air quality management, it was assumed that 30 percent of the exposed playa area would not be emissive, 50 percent of exposed playa area would use air quality management methods, such as water efficient vegetation, and 20 percent of the exposed playa would use other air quality methods.

The ICAPCD concurs with the general assumption in the PEIR that further research is needed in order to establish the final measures for exposed playa. Controlling dust emissions from the exposed playa should be one of the highest, if not the highest, objectives of this or any other reduce inflows alternative.

The PEIR assumes nonemissive areas to be controlled 100 percent without any control measures applied. It is the ICAPCD's position that all exposed playa surfaces can potentially become unstable and may require mitigation. Even relatively small unstable areas can be significant sources of dust. Dust must be controlled as the lake recedes. The Clean Air Act will not allow the "wait and see" approach for mitigation of exposed playa before dust controls are implemented. Even if only portions of the exposed playa emit dust, it will be problematic to decide which portions need to be controlled. Dust controls must be applied before dust emissions start. This may mean that all exposed playa will require dust controls.

Regulation VIII, Fugitive Dust Rules, was adopted by the ICAPCD Air Board on November 8, 2005, and submitted to U.S. EPA to be incorporated into our SIP on June 16, 2006. Rule 804, Open Areas, requires all persons who own or otherwise have jurisdiction over an open area to apply and maintain dust control measures over the open areas to comply with the conditions of a stabilized surface at all times and limits visible dust emissions to 20 percent opacity. According to Rule 804, all exposed playa could be considered an open area and therefore is required to be mitigated. The ICAPCD concurs with the PEIR using a conservative percentage of exposed playa as emissive for the purpose of estimating emissions. However, the ICAPCD recommends that the project level analysis considers mitigation measures for all exposed playa which could potentially become emissive during certain periods of time and included in the total cost for all alternatives evaluated.

The ICAPCD recommends that the PEIR makes an assessment of all Imperial County Rules and Regulations that apply to this project. The PEIR should address an analysis of the impacts of these rules as they pertain to this project and demonstrate compliance with these rules.

#### Methodology for General Conformity Applicability Analysis (Chapter 10, Page 10-30)

ICAPCD Rule 925, General Conformity, which adheres the requirements of U.S. EPA General Conformity Rule, applies to federal actions that result in emissions of "nonattainment pollutants," or their precursors, in federally designated nonattainment areas. As noted in your report, Imperial County is currently classified as a "serious" non attainment area for the PM10 NAAQS and "marginal" nonattainment area for the federal 8-hour ozone NAAQS. In addition, the majority of the alternatives evaluated in the PEIR would exceed the thresholds for Conformity determination of Rule 925; therefore, this restoration project will be required to comply with General Conformity requirements.

ICAPCD Rule 925, General Conformity, establishes a process to demonstrate that federal actions clearly demonstrate that the total direct and indirect emissions from the type of activities which would be presumed to conform would not: a) interfere with provisions in the applicable SIP; b) cause or contribute to new violations of the NAAQS in the area; c) increase the frequency or severity of any existing violations of NAAQS; and d) delay timely attainment of the NAAQS or any required interim emission reductions or other milestones in any area including emission levels in the applicable SIP for purposes of a demonstration of attainment or a maintenance plan.

The criteria for determining conformity of general federal actions requires to demonstrate compliance with Air Quality Standards through an air quality modeling analysis and developing a mechanism to assure that the project fully offsets its emissions within the same nonattainment area. The offset program should be developed through a revision of to the applicable SIP or an equally enforceable measure that effects emission reductions equal to or greater than the total of direct and indirect emissions from the project so that there is no net increase in emissions.

The PEIR briefly discusses some of the General Conformity requirements for the alternatives proposed. Due to the important role that compliance with General Conformity will play on each alternative proposed, the ICAPCD recommends that the project level analysis makes a more in-depth detailed evaluation of General Conformity compliance. If offsetting of emissions is considered as an option to minimize the impact of this project, the cost associated with the offset program shall be included in the total cost of the project.

In closing, the ICAPCD feels that the current PEIR falls short of demonstrating the proper analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed project. With this said, the ICAPCD expects a much more thorough analysis for the project level document. The ICAPCD may have further questions or comments throughout this process and look forward to continued participation on this project.

The ICAPCD appreciates the opportunity to comment on this project. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Brad Poiriez or Reyes Romero of my staff at (760) 482 4606.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Birdsall  
Air Pollution Control Officer

JAN 16 2007

cc: Imperial County Air Pollution Control Board of Directors  
Robertta Burns, CEO, Imperial County  
Ralph Cordova, County Counsel, Imperial County  
Jurg Heuberger, Executive Officer, LAFCO  
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